

HOUSING MANAGEMENT

BULLETIN

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THE TENANTS ACT

Large-scale, community-type housing developments provide opportunities for developing plans for self-improvement that are often lacking in run-of-the-mine urban neighborhoods.

In Milwaukee

The Tenants' Association of Parklawn, the USHA-federal project in Milwaukee, has been active in the support of the Medical Center in Milwaukee, a relatively new organization engaged in the practice of group medicine. In fact, tenants of Parklawn, Greendale and the employees of a few large industrial plants constitute the majority of the subscribers to the Medical Center service. The Medical Society of Milwaukee County, which has heretofore been strongly opposed to the Medical Center, has now offered to the tenants of Parklawn a comparable plan. The Board of Directors of the Tenants' Association, after reviewing this proposed plan, intend to call a meeting of the entire membership of the Association at which are to appear representatives of both the Medical Center and the Medical Society of Milwaukee County.

In Greenhills

The first tenants moved into Greenhills in April 1938. Most of the homes were not available until June 1938. As families were moving in throughout the summer, no formal program of activities was begun until the fall, although several clubs had been organized by the residents through the summer months.

Questionnaires were sent out to all residents to determine their interest in adult classes. As a result, classes were started in the following subjects: Home Making, Manual Arts, Fine Arts, Sewing, Economics, First Aid, Women's Gym, Men's Gym and Golf. The teachers in the school gave one evening a week to the adult education program. Some leadership was obtained from the residents

and agencies in Hamilton County. The total enrollment in the classes is 494 and an average attendance of 300 has been maintained.

There has been great interest in hobby clubs for both children and adults i.e., choral, drama, gun, garden, athletic, radio and pet clubs. Great emphasis has been put on activities for children. The Boy and Girl Scouts troops are very active. In addition to the above, there are many other organizations such as P. T. A., church guilds, American Legion, political clubs, Volunteer Firemen, Credit Union, cooperative, Community Forum, community newspaper and Community Council. A total of approximately 1824 persons are enrolled in different clubs and organizations.

The Community Council is a group of nine members elected by the community to assist the management in determining policies and in planning the recreation and adult education program. Miss Martha Allen, Supervisor of Public Relations, works with the Manager and the Community Council in the supervision of community activities.

In Chicago

While housing officials and agencies are busy conferring amongst themselves tenants are not only inaugurating self-improvement programs within their housing projects, but are investigating plans and activities of tenants in other developments.

Notable among inter-project contacts was a recent visit of a tenant delegation from Julia Lathrop Homes in Chicago to Greendale near Milwaukee and to Parklawn and the Medical Center in Milwaukee. Although the principal object of the trip was to obtain information about group medical services, the contacts with tenants in the two housing developments proved equally stimulating to the visitors.

FIELD NOTES FROM THE MANAGERS

The first field trip directly under the auspices of the Managers' Division was made by Paul L. Stannard, secretary pro-tem of the Division, accompanied by Kenneth R. Kidd, NAHO's apprentice. Below are excerpts from Mr. Kidd's notes on three of the eight projects visited. Others on this trip and on similar field visits will appear in subsequent issues of the Bulletin.

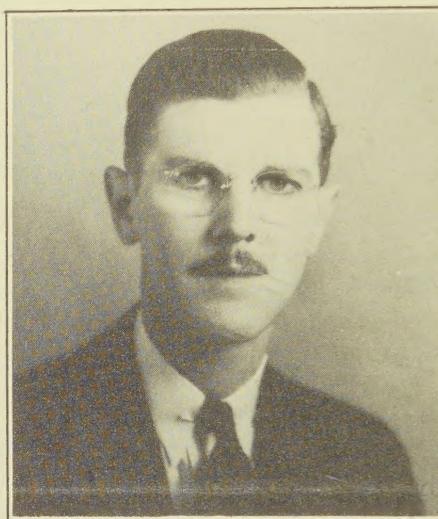
Laurel Homes, Cincinnati

" . . . The project houses both white and Negro families, the Negroes being together in separate buildings at one end of the site. All project business, as well as tenant activities, for this group is handled by a Negro management aide who maintains an office in the Negro section. Publication of their own tenant newspaper has been undertaken recently by the Negroes . . . "

"Walls and ceilings have proved extremely difficult to keep clean because of the high smoke density of the neighborhood, and interiors must be washed down frequently if they are to look at all presentable. As the casein paint used in original decoration has been found unsatisfactory under such heavy treatment, oil paints are being used whenever redecoration of units is necessary.

"Laundry drying rooms have been another major source of difficulty because of the arrangement of heaters and blowers near the ceiling. This arrangement has made it impossible to dry clothes in any reasonable length of time, and has caused the floors in dwellings above these rooms to become so hot that it is difficult to live in them even during the winter. Blowers and pipes are now being re-set along drying room floors, and control valves are being placed in supply pipes coming from the boiler plant. Because these valves had not been installed, there was no possible way to shut steam off from these pipes.

"Fumigation is done by the project when each tenant moves in, and whenever necessary thereafter. Fifty per cent of the cost is charged to the tenant. Although fumigation has eliminated the



Stannard — Visits Managers

problem of vermin, it has created a maintenance problem of another kind. All insecticides used so far have proved to be solvents to the asphalt tile and mastic flooring, resulting in the loosening of tiles from their base after a unit has been fumigated.

"A compound known as 'Actusol' is being used to clean window shades with results which have been very satisfactory and economical. It is used in a solution of 4 or 5 parts of alcohol to 1 part of Actusol. Shades are first wiped down with a rubber sponge pad to remove loose dirt, and then are brushed with the solution which dries almost immediately. It is the opinion of the management that shades which have been treated in this manner look better than when new."

"The nursery school in operation at the project is limited to an enrollment of 25 children and is conducted under WPA supervision. The success of this kind of leadership appears to be questionable in the opinion of the management."

"The management would welcome any suggestions in the matter of 'inspection' technique."

Cheatam Place, Nashville

"Although units are filled without much difficulty, the turnover experienced to date is so large as to constitute the management's major problem. With 25 families moving out during March, turnover reached the total of 150 for the 13 months of project operation. This situation appears to result from the local habit among certain income groups of moving to the surrounding countryside where the family will have plenty of room to itself and can obtain, at very low cost, a house with a porch to 'set on' and a garden plot to cultivate. This exodus usually starts in the spring and continues until fall.

"It is readily apparent that this large turnover has created quite an expensive redecoration and maintenance problem. The casein paint finish on walls and ceilings has not stood up under the necessarily frequent washings. Oil paint is now

being used when redecoration of units becomes necessary.

"Proper maintenance of shrubbery has been difficult and expensive. It is in far too great abundance and many of the plants which require trellises or other support are being permitted to suffer because insufficient funds were budgeted for such expenditures. Results of tenant maintenance of backyards have not been too satisfactory to date.

"A large enclosed playground is one of the original facilities provided at Cheatum Place. Although WPA personnel are used in its supervision, such personnel as have been supplied to date have not been considered competent by the management."

Techwood, Atlanta

"The 604-unit Techwood Homes project for white families is an attractive apartment development. In fact, the panorama of its buildings gives one an impression more of luxury apartments than of low-rent housing. The abundance of shrubbery and other landscaping is probably responsible for this impression. Although this may be desirable from the esthetic standpoint, for practical purposes there is entirely too much primary landscaping and much of it is ill placed. Its maintenance and protection constitute a major problem, and attempts to educate tenants to be more careful, both with shrubs and with lawns, have been fruitless. A landscape maintenance force of six men was required to keep shrubs and lawns in shape during the summer of 1938.

"Occupancy turnover is almost as heavy as that experienced at Cheatum Place in Nashville, and according to the manager, it occurs for the same reason. Twenty-two tenants moved from the project during this past February. Present management policy refuses readmittance of all families who move out purely to satisfy their annual spring and summer urge for the country."

"The management is now engaged in replacing doors on most of the garages as they have completely rotted out. Wood used in their construction was unseasoned and almost paper-thin. This situation has caused no little replacement expenditure as well as some adverse public criticism.

"The usual tenant activities such as women's groups, scout troops, tenant newspaper, etc., are in progress. The kindergarten, conducted by the

city board of education, has an enrollment of over 50 children. Facilities for this and for other activities are located generally in converted basement space. A small auditorium is located in one of the apartment buildings, but it is entirely inadequate for any sizeable tenant get-together.

"Playgrounds consisting entirely of small decentralized *tot lots*, surfaced with blacktop. With no shade available over this hard surface, heat radiation from the summer sun makes these tot lots quite uncomfortable.

"An extension of the present project is planned by the local authority under a loan contract approved by USHA. Site acquisition is already under way and demolition will begin as soon as possible."

Lauderdale Courts, Memphis

"An interesting deviation from the usual rent collection procedure is used at Lauderdale Courts. It is essentially a method whereby the tenant, under certain circumstances, may obtain a partial extension of his rent upon application to the manager. Such an extension (never granted in the amount of a full month's rent) must be requested by the tenant on a quite detailed form provided for the purpose by the management. To be accepted for consideration, it must be accompanied by a portion of the current rent due. The tenant is required to explain his reasons for his inability to pay the rent in full, and must make a definite commitment for payment of the balance on which he is requesting the extension. In signing the request the tenant acknowledges his continuing obligation to pay his rent in full on the first day of each month. Approval for partial extension is given only by the manager. This partial extension plan has had an excellent psychological effect, both in reducing rental delinquencies and in curtailing the number of requests for extension.

"Another collection procedure used is also of note. If a tenant has neither paid his rent by the third day of the month nor has submitted a partial extension request, a collection letter is sent by special delivery mail, timed to be delivered about 11 o'clock in the evening. If a second letter is necessary, it is sent by registered mail, timed also to arrive late in the evening by special delivery. This second letter, however, has been necessary on only two or three occasions, as a prompt response from the tenant is usually obtained by the first letter. Postage and costs of writing the letters

is charged to the tenant's account for the current month. The rental office is open from 7 a. m. to 9 p. m. on the last, first, and second days of each month.

"No major maintenance problems exist, although such things as lawn maintenance, janitor service to the apartments, a few exterior wall cracks in some buildings, rusting of window casements, and others, keep the maintenance staff of 12 men busy. A large amount of landscape maintenance has been eliminated by surfacing the areas around porches and other entrances with brick. Other projects have a great deal of difficulty in maintaining grass and shrubs, usually placed around such areas, because of the destruction caused by small children.

"The management feels quite handicapped in not having a *large central play area*. Space on one side of the project may be used eventually for this purpose. Tot lots scattered around the project have not been very satisfactory, primarily because of the type of hard surface used in their construction. In the heat of summer this surface becomes soft and sticky."

"Although it continues as a maintenance policy of the management, tenant maintenance of back yards has not worked out very satisfactorily. This, however, cannot be blamed on the tenants entirely. Rear walks were not laid until two months ago. Also on ground where even the maintenance force cannot get grass to grow successfully, only spot sodding was done. Under these conditions, too much cannot be expected from tenant back-yard maintenance."

"The manager of Lauderdale Courts acts as general housing manager for the two Memphis projects now in operation."

ORGANIZATION PROGRESS

At the first meeting of the Committee on Organization and Procedure of the Managers' Division, Carleton F. Sharpe, Community Manager of Green-hills, was elected chairman. At an all-day session the Committee considered the essential by-laws for the Division, an augmented field service for managers, the strengthening of management training and the continuation and improvement of the Bulletin as the Division's basic means of communication among its members.

Paul L. Stannard, Manager of Cedar-Central Apartments in Cleveland, was designated secretary pro-tem of the Division and of the Committee on Organization and Procedure. He and Chairman Voigt agreed to canvass the list of eligibles for charter membership in the Division, preparatory to the appointment of committees to handle the various units of the program. Mr. Sharpe undertook to make the first draft of the by-laws in the light of the Committee's discussions.

The members of the committee were unanimous in their approval of the selection of a NAHO field man with management experience and outlook. Mr. Carl Henry Monsees, now chief of NAHO's field service, has these qualifications. His first assignment was to talk with Mr. Voigt about how he could best serve the members of the Division. It was also agreed that Messrs. Voigt, Stannard, Sharpe and Goldfeld would make short field trips soon after the committee meeting to learn directly from prospective members how the Division might serve them most effectively during the rather trying period of organization. At the time this issue of the Bulletin is being prepared, three of these field trips have already been completed.



Organization Chairman

Both because of its basic importance and the availability of another grant of \$2500 from the Lavanburg Foundation of New York, management training has the distinction of being the subject of the first standing committee appointed to serve the Managers' Division. Its members, named by Chairman Voigt, are: Abraham Goldfeld, chairman; members—Mrs. May Lumsden, Barton P. Jenks, Jr., Franklin Thorne and Roy S. Braden.

DISTRIBUTION POLICY ON BULLETIN

The HOUSING MANAGEMENT BULLETIN is distributed to members of NAHO who have signified their desire to receive it for a trial period. Copies are available to non-members only by purchase of individual issues at 15c each. It is anticipated that the BULLETIN will become shortly the official organ of the Managers' Division of NAHO.